



ZAFER ARACAGÖK 2015-10-12

## TAKING FROM BEHIND

PHILOFICTION DELEUZE/GUATTARI, MERZ-HASEN, NON-ART, QUEER

TAKING FROM BEHIND

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09/10/2015 – 07/11/2015

ALAN Istanbul presents Zafer Aracagök's new show Taking From Behind!

With his new show, Taking from Behind, Zafer Aracagök forces the line and the watercolour to a realm of figural trajectories.

Finding a point of departure in the rhythms of composition/decomposition backed up with strategic approaches to the figure, he aims to capture the figural. Aracagök opens up the multi-layered styles of personal expression of line and colour which take the question of representation from behind to multiplicities, and

then, leaves us alone with our own traumas, that is, with an invitation to trace our own primal scenes. Resonating not only with eyes or ears but also with the whole body, heterogeneous lines – or similitudes of line – unlock the act of taking from behind to rumbling vibrations of the desire machines that produce pleasure rather than pain. Renowned for his articles and books he wrote on the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari and also for his electronic music project, SIFIR, Aracagök developed the concept of his show under the influence of Deleuzian thought, yet again. Taking From Behind defines Deleuze's approach to philosophers of the past whom he philosophizes about in order to create

monsters out of them. In Aracagök's watercolours, components of line and colour traversing the contours of the figural, make visible in the background the scary and monster-like qualities of the contemporary intellectual and social conflicts, thus, creating an humorous 'event' with much laughter and clamour. Furthermore, publication of the Turkish translation of his last book, Atopological Trilogy: Deleuze and Guattari concurrently with this show will most probably miraculate indeterminable atopological perversions of viscosity in watercolouredness by way of introducing new approaches of his own to the concept of 'taking from behind' as well as to the queer theory and various forms of becoming-sexual. Taking from Behind is open to speculation at ALAN Istanbul until November 7th, 2015

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a matter of approach

as I unfold the layers of watercolor and spread them on the surface while the protocols of the figurative are shaken even though the paper white and wet attempts to be hegemonic it comes from the woods after all it comes from the trees it belongs to nature to such an extent that I can not deliver it and it can not betray me therefore when asked it would say I have no fixed abode I wander around and if they try to catch me I will betray so that it is time for projection for one does not know what will come about yet even if it could be known it would not come about because the despotic machine snaps it off from that moebius strip and makes it its own and this behavior can be

traced back to german romanticists the issue is to drag everything to a point where there is no difference between life and art where life is not life and art is not art but not like those fascist policemen who with tear gas forced us to the iftar tables in taksim thanks to which we do not know anymore what gestalt is but this is actually a good thing as they are not the same lines they are all the more different lines the former a line that locks itself in gallery rooms it is the turkish line the grotesque line and figurative because it will hit you in the face like a slap with no effect as much

phatic as it is and the latter the poor one intending to reach from one point to another yet always failing to do so as a result of incessant divergences towards undulations of the surface abstaining from forming a full wave even turning still just before becoming complete and yet at the same time because of a shuttling between the subject of enunciation and the subject of enunciation not yielding to the hegemony the curves of which the despot can not take hold of as those subject-likes who can never go from downstairs to upstairs in those windowless rooms where they keep summoning to whatever-image whose sensing the other rooms make you also sense those rooms

this is a line

a line which never denies the shuttling between the points therefore can only exist with the traces of a line in addition to these shuttlings within heterogenous multilayers once smeared with colours adding its own traces to watercolours taking things from behind so as not to be related with pain at all but on the contrary with pleasure a line-like which organizes the production of pleasure by taking behind the figure and the first line the ur-line or noisy line-likes or noise-like lines emancipating all the resonating colours of a bass tone coming from deep down underground and the noisy line-like not only to be heard only with the ear and the eye but also to be put into resonance with the whole body sets fire to all those votes on the white paper taking all from behind preceding at the same time all the moments of birth all the baby cries at heimat I said oh when they asked me my abode I said ah I wish I could know and think of a layer a singular layer without a front back inside outside due to which I cannot even move forth and back between two things said the line-like I can only disseminate that it only knew too well it is only a state of dissemination a state of flowing the beginning of which is right out there can't you see it sir my noble sir dear sirs dear ministers dear prime ministers dear presidents masters of nano layers look I am fleeing again from where there is no plane of consistency for me neither plane of organization isn't it I am taking from behind you the sound the figure the colour

this is a desire image

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### **Tuna Erdem and Seda Ergül**

FILL UP THE BACKSEATS, STEP ON THE GRASS, CARESS THE HAIR

It's not that Zafer isn't aware that we don't know much about Deleuze, why is it then, he wanted us to talk about his paintings? We've been talking about "art" for a while, without pretending to be experts; we also make art with the same attitude. However, although the context that we are familiar with the artist is a theoretical one, and it's also the very same concern for theory that brings us all three together; when it comes to theory, Zafer prefers to be groundless whereas we move on various, different grounds. We have habits which can be considered as sin according to Deleuze and Guattari, such as jauntily interpreting art texts, analyzing them metaphorically, studying the texts thoroughly and delving into their imagined depths, and leaning on psychoanalysis all throughout– and Zafer is quite aware of these tendencies of ours.

Isn't it quite a risk, asking us to write for him?

It's obvious the artist has taken us from behind, asking us the question we didn't expect. Still, it didn't cross our minds to refuse his request – we love his paintings, we were eager to spend time with them, think about them, talk about them.

We were eager to be taken from behind.

As a result we have made a touristic tour in the land of Deleuze and Guattari. With maps in our hands, we set off to get lost.

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First, with an ignorant's courage, we've done what we should have never done and looked for similarities: we said, "Look, here's Deleuze and Guattari, two authors and one book, and we're Seda and Tuna, we're going to write a single text together". After having wrapped ourselves in the fame of those, with whom we have compared ourselves for the sake of finding a similarity, we've

realized it was not about two people; and particularly not about these two people intersecting, melting together and creating one single text. Wasn't it already in the first sentence of A Thousand Plateaus:

"We, the two of us, wrote the book together. As each one of us is several, it made quite a crowd."

Since we've been writing together for a while, we were aware that the resulting text would crack under the weight of two people, and it's what leaks out of these cracks that is appealing. However crack-repairing teams are always on duty and ready to work. See, we began by talking about just Deleuze, instead of Deleuze and Guattari. We're neither the first nor the last to have done that – despite the fact that Deleuze writes with another style and approach when he's alone. Despite the fact that what one considers Deleuze's ideas actually comes from those texts written together with Guattari, instead of the ones Deleuze wrote by himself.

The teachings of Zen suggest that the "mind of the beginner" is valuable. The goal of the master is to arrive at the mind of the beginner despite everything he has learned. Of course, this not yet formatted, not yet structured, not yet blinded mind which becomes blind by focusing on producing resemblances between what one sees and the things one has previously seen is also the mind of a child. Therefore, Zafer's paintings helped us enter the world of Deleuze and Guattari as "beginners". We had to walk in the darkness of the theory we don't know, and in the light of the paintings (it's hard to find a metaphor worse than this pro-enlightenment one). We began by scattering words of theory on paintings from the perspective of those who first encounter them, who don't yet know, who don't worry about what they know, who haven't interrelated everything with every other thing. Maybe that's why the "beginner" series of books are always in the form of graphic novels. Maybe the entrance to the world of theory is not necessarily through the language of words, but of pictures. Maybe the rise of the number of languages points at what's missing in each one of them. Maybe that's because A Thousand Plateaus contains not only words but also drawings, and that Marc Ngui took the trouble of illustrating every paragraph of it in the form of a comic book.

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We first came across these striking, colorful paintings on Zafer's Facebook profile. However it was only after we were convinced one work will continuously be followed by another that we've realized it was Zafer who has painted them. In addition to his abundant production of writing and music, we realized he also paints. In summer, we sat for hours at his kitchen table and looked at the original paintings, the beauty of which has made our eyes sparkle. But the fact that there's so many of them makes it much better. He's probably painting everyday, with each painting taking not longer than a few hours; he's probably not thinking long and hard; he's probably not throwing a painting away when he's not happy with what he's done in order to do it again. There's a lot, quite a lot of them. That they're the result of an ongoing process is more valuable than the sum of the value of each one. It's a kind of a diary, a kind of meditation. Apparently, the knowledge that he'll continue the next day sets him and his work free. Each one is a point and together they form dotted lines. Sexual desire and politics, philosophy and anecdotes come together with the help of these dotted lines, they transform into each other, they breed but don't double, they mate. They're happy and cheeky, colorful and obscene, sometimes scandalous and taboo-like, however they're always playful and never libelous: there's nothing offensive in these pictures; though if you were to look at the details, there are plenty of things that can be considered offensive. That's exactly why it's possible to think that they take one from behind, they mount one without startling, they get in without scaring or making one anxious or letting one understand what's happening. They're like brightly colored sugar coated pills which you swallow thinking they're candies. They make you delightfully realize that taking from behind is equal to being caught unaware.

The viewer also has "to take from behind" these works as they don't offer a central perspective in accordance with the renaissance perspective – we can't talk about a situation where everything works together to make the illusion absolute; where the viewer sits on a throne or a balcony and lays about with the power given to him/her. The eye has to move on the canvas from one detail to another, it has to jump around and be mobile, it has to repeat within the canvas the movement of the body in the gallery. In this regard, and because they contain more direct references, they resemble miniatures. They can even be considered a comic in which the protagonists are Zazu and the super hero Zafer who can be seen in many outfits – our favorites are the ones in which he wears a head scarf. On the other hand there are lines of view that connect one detail to another, that carry the eye from one image to another, but these are also misleading; you'll get lost if you follow them, you'll find yourself back at the beginning. In other words, these are maps that open up the way to getting lost.

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In the absence of perspective, random layers devoid of hierarchy fall on one another:

Interrupted, uninterrupted pencil lines, messy incomplete figure-alikes, recurring figures of Zafer, Zazu, bears, birds, fish and those that resemble nothing. Bright colors, instead of leaking through the holes of unclosed boundaries brim over directly from these holes. Words and sentences, most of the time independent of lines and colors, and devoid of clear references as to what they mean. The 2.5th level of this two dimensional world is a cacophony that comprises collaged papers, new lines and colors and words on these papers and moments plucked from other points in time, from other papers. Daily life, which we can't treat –with sentences that don't follow the order of logic– like a story without a beginning or an end, a story that's always laid out in the middle, that always grows from the middle; because there's no higher level, because everything was formed here. Time is a slippery ground where everything that's lived, remembered, imagined, connoted exist together. Painting is a point on this ground. Paintings are maps made of these points. But maps can't anchor this space-time topography. Because this is a windy climate, the

lines move and we can't predict where we'll end up. Such is daily-life: though movement is certain; speed, direction and contact points are uncertain. And by rolling on in such a fashion we arrive at a new name each day. The names of paintings are made up of a combination of words and out of habit we assume that a sequence of words creates a meaning. However meaning is as useless as coordinates that tell exactly the location of a body in an ocean. A name tells us exactly where we are, while at the same time pointing out that this piece of knowledge is unimportant. We'll swim in the huge ocean of the history of thought – knowing our location just emphasizes the fact that we'll be hanging out here for a long time. We're in the middle.

When we approach the paintings with an effort to understand them, we miss the point. We try to understand them because we're looking for a line that connects this multiplicity. It's a bad habit. It's as imposing and invasive as a path that aims to connect the thousand plateaus. A murderer who, the moment he/she makes something accessible, destroys it as a result of having made it accessible. We have to get away from this destruction and take things from behind.

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It's against the spirit of Deleuze and Guattari to attempt to make something understandable by translating it, to point out what lies behind the words, to descend into the depths of the text by using visual rescue ropes. And in *A Thousand Plateaus* they say that the paintings should possess haptic qualities, they should address the sense of touch rather than the eye – that the haptic perceptions should be aroused through vision. Zafer's paintings do exactly that. For example the pencil-drawn stomach hair in the painting entitled *Libidinal Nomadology* stimulate –through our eyes– our sense of touch to such an extent that we realize an image of hair can directly provoke a desire to caress

hair. In other words, the painting makes you experience the pleasure of hair-fetishism even though you may not have such tendencies, putting you into a state of becoming-fetishist. However, fetishes and dreams are so subject-oriented that they mean nothing to anyone other than the subject himself or herself. What invests the fetish object, is actually the desire of the person who fetishizes it. Zafer's painting makes us a part of this process of investment and invites us to haptically approach an object – "just body hair" – that is deemed despicable and even repulsive most of the time. If nothing else, you establish contact with hair through Zazu's fur who appears on the left side of the painting: one common feature of man is the pleasure of caressing cat's fur as we have learned from Facebook. This pleasure can also be brimmed over and transferred to hairy bodies. Here, to brim over is also an important act; because hair is imprisoned in a rectangle, in a frame, in such a way that this rectangle, on its own, could also be the painting itself. Yet in this case, it wouldn't be possible to deterritorialize the caressability of the hair, to put it into circulation with other hairs. Hairs spread along with lines of flight; they strew unexpected places as well as the expected ones. Nevertheless this doesn't occur through a process of producing resemblances but by way of producing connections. Even though it's not cat hair that occupies the rectangle, the rhizomatic relations between the hand and hair begin to circulate; they trigger a nomadic libidinal energy instead of investing a sedentary position as in fetishism; and consequently the caressing relationship established with a cat can thus be transferred to other hairs.

In *Red Line Desire*, another painting in which hair plays the leading role, hairy body turns into a rectangle block; it looks almost like a tomb (one of us who sympathizes with Deleuze and Guattari screams "no resemblances!" "no similarities!", and we encapsulate her in these parenthesis and move on) and the red waistband that lends the painting its name wraps around the body and separates the waist up from the waist down. Right next to the block is an ass. This ass appears to have been added specifically for those who might think that the purpose of the transformation of the body into a block, and the separation of the lower body, is to prevent the possibility of the emergence of obscenity. Naturally, because it's placed right next to the tomb-like bulk, it reminds us of Bersani's question: "is the rectum a grave?". But the most important thing is that in this case it's hair which makes us see this rectangular mass as a body. Indeed, there's hair all over the painting in its various forms: right below the ass to the left of the painting is a hairy torso; in the foreground is hairy man who rides a dispersed, disfigured figure on a hairy carpet. The chain comprising eye, pleasure and similarities moves from one hair to another: if your eyes attempt to get away from the hairy chest, they're caught by the tame carpet hairs – they become smeared with sexuality that's present on the hair and disperse. To such an extent that, one can, while trying to avoid hair, find himself wanting to become ass hair. (This is also a resemblance, but we now see that the important thing is not to lessen, but to multiply. Resemblances end when we're out of breath, and not when we exhaust the things we can say about the object. In other words, the resemblances that we'll produce again and again in different contexts, are like bunches of hair or grass that exist in endless middles without a beginning nor an end: step on the grass, caress the hair). The most solid part of the body in *Becoming Within The Plane of Consistency*, which gets disintegrated as we take it from behind, is the hair-covered leg. It's obvious we'll get disintegrated as well with the appeal of the hair, but it's also possible to dive into some other becomings via the nail polish on the foot that belongs to this leg. This and other nail polishes add their viscous characteristic to the dispersing nature of watercolors in Zafer's paintings.

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The chaos we find ourselves in, when we keep ourselves away from heights and meaning, when we dive into the painting from the middle is the immanent plane that appears to be the ground of Deleuze and Guattari's thought. The presence of a ground in a language that exerts its weight on us, unavoidably points out the existence of a building that is to be built. However the thought of Deleuze and Guattari is one that is horizontal, pervasive and not inclined to transcend; and it possesses a ground which incessantly gets more and more substantial. Substantiality necessarily evokes solidity, certainty and compromise. But the durability of this ground emanates from the multiplication of weak, soft, flexible and indefinite pieces over and over again. It tightens up by multiplying. Like pine needles, like a handful of thin grass. Thought swells from this never-ending, continuously

becoming, regenerating fluid ground; and it evaporates, assumes form as much as mist would, and then it loses its form, finally returns to the plane and finds again a temporary embodiment in new sounds, images and words. Such a cycle.

This is an energetic, lively thought that gets its strength from the multiplication of the weak and from unexpected groupings that emerge at a random moment, maybe never to be repeated. And there's another thought against it which it's fighting: a thought that gets its strength from certainty, compromise and from the way it gets more and more sharpened and definite with each repetition; a thought that focuses on refinement, tradition and the necessity of compressing the past. Because its intention of making representation reach its peak, this is a thought which gets its value from being independent from its thinker, which has to organize, standardize and direct the pleasure and energy of the multiplicity, guaranteeing that we're speaking the same language, and desiring a single perspective. In contrast, the thought that constantly appears and disappears, that doesn't accumulate, that doesn't reach its peak can at most dream of misty plateaus. And mist, the most fantastic experience a plateau can endow, results from the descent of clouds, and not the ascent of heads towards heavens. And the deserter of the unique plateau of nomadism, communality and being-onewith- animals is absolutely singular.

The struggle is arduous, the paths are determined, and Zafer makes his choice, every single day, again and again.

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